

argument this is not a significant attempt to strengthen the border in this country.

We were already spending more money on border enforcement than we do on any other Federal law enforcement combined as it was. We had gone to about 22,000 Border Patrol agents already as it was. Now we are doubling that number—doubling—as an attempt to respond to a very reasonable concern the American people have that the border should be as secure as possible. So that is now part of this legislation.

So those are three things people have argued: The process was too fast, the bill was going to negatively affect the deficit, and our border is still insecure. Those were the arguments that were made.

Now we don't hear those arguments so much anymore. Now we hear scare stories about health care. We are hearing scare stories about how this will affect our economy even though the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has said we are going to see five additional points of gross domestic product growth—GDP growth—in the second 10 years of this bill passing, as a result of bringing people out of the shadows.

It is not as if the 11 million people who are here and who are undocumented are not working. They are working. Many of them are working in this country. Many of them are working in the agriculture sector in my State and in this country. Many are working in other industries as well all across the United States. But they are working in an unlawful way. They are working in a cash economy. They are working in a situation where they are easily exploited. Because of that, they drag down the wages of everybody in America.

Workers in my State who are here and who are legal—l-e-g-a-l—are having to compete in a marketplace where there are people who can pay less because they know there are people who have to take less because they do not have lawful recourse.

All the protections we put in this bill, all the protections to make sure, and rightfully so, an American is offered a job first; to ensure, and rightfully so, we are not bringing in a whole bunch of new people when there are Americans looking for work—all of those protections pale in comparison to the protection of bringing 11 million people out of the shadows and out of a cash economy and into a place where they are paid a lawful wage and they are paying their taxes to the U.S. Government.

If all someone cared about, if the only thing someone cared about when they got up in the morning and went to bed at night was rising wages for Americans, solving this issue finally for the 11 million would be the most important thing you could do. And we do that in this bill.

The opponents of this bill are not seriously suggesting they are going to go to the expense of sending 11 million

people back to where they came from. They are not seriously suggesting, in answer to this issue, that nothing in the CBO report is true, that none of it makes sense, that this is about ObamaCare when what we are really trying to do for once in this place is solve a set of challenging issues in a bipartisan way.

Mr. President, even more than that, for a decade or more, because of our broken immigration system, the policy of this country has been to turn back talented people—even people educated at our universities, even people educated to be engineers and mathematicians. When they have graduated from college here, at our expense, in many cases, we have not said to them: Stay here and build your business. Compete here and help us grow this economy. Start a business—as half of the Fortune 100 or 500 companies have been started by immigrants. No. We have said: Go home. Go home to India and compete with us from there. Go home to China and hire other people over there.

If we pass this bill, we will say once again that this nation of immigrants is open for business, that we are open to the most creative and talented people in the world, that we want them to drive our economy in the United States just as they have generation after generation going back to our Founders.

It is a great testament to who we are and to the nature of our country that people want to come here, and under the right circumstances we should have them here. The CBO report—and I don't even care about the CBO report—makes it very clear—makes it very clear—what businesspeople in my State already know: It makes it clear to the agricultural industry in my State, the high-tech industry in my State, the ski resorts in my State that the objections of people of goodwill on this bill have been met through compromise and through principled agreement.

This is a good piece of legislation. We shouldn't, in this ninth or eleventh hour or whatever it is—the ninth inning—allow ourselves to get distracted by the politics seeking to divide us in this Chamber or in this country. And I don't believe we will. So I urge my colleagues to support the passage of this bill.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I hope the Senator wasn't rushed completing his statement, because I was listening intently and appreciating all he said today.

I haven't had the opportunity to express through the instruments of this floor how much I appreciate the Senator from Colorado. He has done such a terrific job. He has been one of the four Democrats. He hasn't sought a lot of press on this, but he has been a stalwart in getting this done for a couple reasons.

One, his State of Colorado is a perfect example as to why we need this

bill. The demographics have changed in that State remarkably, as they have in my State of Nevada. His quiet concern for what we need to do and then his quiet movement to make sure we get the things done we need to is evident in this immigration bill.

Frankly, we had a discussion today in our caucus, as we have had on several occasions, about student loans. No one is better prepared to talk about that issue than the Senator from Colorado. He is not only concerned about what happens to students who are in college, but also he was a school superintendent, understanding what people who want to go to college have to deal with. So I appreciate very much the statements of the Senator from Colorado. He has done a remarkably good job, and the people of Colorado are so fortunate to have this good man in the Senate.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I agree with the President that climate change represents one of the greatest challenges of our time, but it is also a challenge uniquely suited to our strengths as a country. Our scientists, researchers, universities and entrepreneurs stand ready to design and build new, less polluting energy sources. Vermont's and our country's farmers and forestland owners stand ready to grow renewable fuels. American businesses will innovate and develop new energy technologies that will reduce pollution and grow our economy with jobs that cannot be shipped overseas. Our workforce stands ready to modernize our power plants and retrofit our buildings to meet 21st century efficiency standards.

I stand ready to support the President, and Vermonters want to do our part. The important goals the President has laid out today will create jobs, save lives and protect and preserve our treasured natural resources for future generations.

No single step can accomplish the goals that President Obama has presented today, but we must begin now, and take these critical first steps together. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to address these threats and be responsible stewards of the earth. Just as any Vermonter who has hiked the 200 miles of Vermont's beautiful Long Trail can tell you, the journey begins with a commitment to reach a goal, and a first step in that direction.

Climate change is not a far-off or remote challenge. The impacts are overtaking us today around the globe and